



There is a lake in distant Zan,  
Beyond the wonted haunts of man,  
Where broods alone in a hideous state  
A spirit dead and desolate;  
A spirit ancient and unholy,  
Heavy with fearsome melancholy,  
Which from the waters dull and dense  
Draws vapors cursed with pestilence.  
Around the banks, a mire of clay,  
Sprawl things offensive in decay,  
And curious birds that reach that shore  
Are seen by mortals nevermore.  
Here shines by day the searing sun  
On glassy wastes beheld by none,  
And here by night pale moonbeams flow  
Into the deeps that yawn below.  
In nightmares only is it told  
What scenes beneath those beams unfold;  
What scenes, too old for human sight,  
Lie sunken there in endless night;  
For in those depths there only pace  
The shadows of a voiceless race.  
One midnight, redolent of ill,  
I saw that lake, asleep and still;  
While in the lurid sky there rode  
A gibbous moon that glow'd and glow'd.  
I saw the stretching marshy shore,  
And the foul things those marshes bore:  
Lizards and snakes convuls'd and dying;  
Ravens and vampires putrefying;  
All these, and hov'ring o'er the dead,  
Narcophagi that on them fed.  
And as the dreadful moon climb'd high,  
Fright'ning the stars from out the sky,  
I saw the lake's dull water glow  
Till sunken things appear'd below.  
There shone unnumber'd fathoms down,

The tow'rs of a forgotten town;  
The tarnish'd domes and mossy walls;  
Weed-tangled spires and empty halls;  
Deserted fanes and vaults of dread,  
And streets of gold uncovered.  
These I beheld, and saw beside  
A horde of shapeless shadows glide;  
A noxious horde which to my glance  
Seem'd moving in a hideous dance  
Round slimy sepulchres that lay  
Beside a never-travell'd way.  
Straight from those tombs a heaving rose  
That vex'd the waters' dull repose,  
While lethal shades of upper space  
Howl'd at the moon's sardonic face.  
Then sank the lake within its bed,  
Suck'd down to caverns of the dead,  
Till from the reeking, new-stript earth  
Curl'd foetid fumes of noisome birth.  
About the city, nigh uncover'd,  
The monstrous dancing shadows hover'd,  
When lo! there oped with sudden stir  
The portal of each sepulchre!  
No ear may learn, no tongue may tell  
What nameless horror then befell.  
I see that lake—that moon agrin—  
That city and the things within—  
Waking, I pray that on that shore  
The nightmare lake may sink no more!



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